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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

BOATING SAFETY AND WATERWAY ENFORCEMENT FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020

A Plan to ensure the public has a safe, secure, and enjoyable recreational boating experience in Louisiana.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the relationship and memorandum of understanding between the State of Louisiana [represented by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Law Enforcement Division (LDWF/LED)] and The United States [represented by the United States Coast Guard (USCG)] in the conduct of the Boating Safety Programs and in the mutual enforcement of laws relating to boating safety on waters within the concurrent jurisdiction of Louisiana and the United States, LDWF/LED has executed their Boating Safety and Waterway Enforcement Five Year Strategic Plan. The plan describes the goals, objectives, and strategies to reduce recreational boating crash incidents and deaths for the years 2016-2020. It will serve as the primary framework for programmatic decision-making, budgeting, and program evaluation. The plan contains and identifies the need for a strategic plan, a description of Louisiana's waterways, and processes to achieve LDWF/LED boating safety goals.

INTRODUCTION

Over two million people enjoy recreational boating activities on Louisiana waters which are indicated by the 320,000 registered boats in use on a year round basis as boaters enjoy Louisiana's mild climate. Louisiana's maze of rivers, streams, bayous and lakes account for 7,409 square miles of inland lakes and 40,679 linear miles of flowing rivers and bayous that makes up the state's inland waterway system. Add to this 1,031 square miles of territorial seas, 7,721 miles of tidal shorelines and over six million acres of productive coastal estuaries that provide multi-user recreational and commercial activities that impact this state and in some cases the nation. Additionally, Louisiana's waters transport numerous migratory, big game and small game hunters as well as all types of fresh and saltwater fishermen during the months that most states enjoy their winter vacations. Tens of thousands of documented vessels and non-motorized vessels engage in water related activities that increase user diversification and are growing concerns. Recreational boating activities also have a \$1.3 billion economic impact in Louisiana. Recreational boating supports over 15,000 jobs and generates over \$80 million in state and local taxes and over \$82 million in federal taxes.

Because Louisiana is so wealthy in natural resources (fish, shrimp, oysters, wildlife, neo-tropical birds, etc.) it is common for vessels to serve as platforms for multi-use activities in this state. Boating in Louisiana is a 12-month activity that has to be continuously monitored and supervised to insure compliance with required safety requirements and for the protection of human life.

LDWF/LED is responsible for providing public safety services on Louisiana's vast waterways through education and enforcement of criminal statutes. These responsibilities include maintaining and improving public compliance with boating safety laws, investigating all reportable recreational boating fatalities and crash incidents, enforcing laws restricting the operation of vessels under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and



administering the state's mandatory boating education program for operation of certain motorboats. LDWF/LED also maintains authority for permitting regattas and other marine events and ensuring compliance with boating safety regulations. LDWF/LED regularly coordinates its boating safety and waterway enforcement activities with local law enforcement waterway efforts to direct the state's efforts on Louisiana waterways. These activities recruit new recreational boaters, encourage safe and legal activities, protect property, and save lives. LDWF/LED's ultimate goal is a safe, secure, and enjoyable recreational boating experience on Louisiana's waterways.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE NATIONAL RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY PROGRAM

The LDWF/LED Boating Safety and Waterway Enforcement Five Year Strategic Plan complements and is derived from the Strategic Plan of the National Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Program implemented in 2012.

The National RBS Program is administered by the USCG with funds derived from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund to ensure a "safe, secure, and enjoyable recreational boating experience..." The fund provides for grants administered by the USCG to states participating in the State Recreational Boating Safety Program. Louisiana is a participant of this program. By complementing and deriving goals from the National RBS Plan, Louisiana is not only working to make state waters safer, but the nation's waters safer.

VISION

The vision of LDWF/LED is to provide the citizens and visitors of Louisiana with the safest, securest, and most enjoyable recreational boating experience possible while on Louisiana's abundant waterways and coastal areas by providing consistent and exceptional public safety and education.

MISSION

The mission of the LDWF/LED Boating Safety and Waterway Enforcement Five Year Strategic Plan is to minimize the loss of life, personal injury, and property damage incurred in recreational boating while cooperating with environmental and homeland security efforts. This mission will be fulfilled by implementing programs and activities in boating safety education and enforcement that have been identified as being effective in reducing boating crash incidents, injuries, property damage, and fatalities.



STRATEGIC GOALS

For the most part recreational boating is a fun and safe activity; however, every year in Louisiana people are involved in boating crash incidents, which in the worst case can lead to fatal incidents. In recent history, Louisiana has one of the highest fatality rates among states with at least 100,000 registered boats. These deaths and crashes are preventable.

LDWF/LED is committed to reducing the boating crash incidents and fatalities by a two-pronged effort:

- 1) Boating safety education and
- 2) Enforcement of boating safety laws and regulations.

LDWF/LED agents make sure that boaters carry the proper safety equipment (personal flotation devices and fire extinguishers) and operate safely, carefully, and sober. This two-pronged approach is the guiding principle of our strategic goals.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

GOAL ONE: INCREASE PUBLIC EDUCATION ON SAFE BOATING PRACTICES AND OPERATION

Objective One: *Increase the Number of Boating Safety Education Successful Completions.*

Strategy 1-1.1—Continue to grow partnerships with boating organizations, volunteer groups, and schools to increase the number of boating courses available and increase the number of volunteer instructors across the state.

Strategy 1-1.2—Become more aggressive with marketing the location and times of boating education courses so that the public is informed of where and when they can complete a course.

Strategy 1-1.3—Work to implement boating safety course promotional days by partnering with businesses in each of the enforcement regions to provide promotion items, food, drink, and facilities for specially designated boating safety courses throughout the year.

Strategy 1-1.4—Increase voluntary compliance with the state's mandatory boating education law.

Objective Two: *Increase Awareness of Safe Boating Practices*

Strategy 1-2.1—Promote a branded message for issues such as life jacket wear, alcohol-use, completing a safe boating course, etc. For example, "Wear It Louisiana!"



Strategy 1-2.2—Target geographic areas that have historically higher incidents of crashes and/or fatalities to increase boating safety awareness partnering with local businesses, boating organizations, and volunteers.

Strategy 1-2.3—Increase the presence of law enforcement officers on the water to act as a deterrent and provide on-the-water delivery of branded messages.

Strategy 1-2.4—Increase cooperative partnerships with businesses (i.e. marine dealers, alcohol beverage distributors, marinas, etc.) to fund and support marketing and outreach efforts that promote safe boating practices, information on vessel security zones and other relevant homeland security and boating safety issues.

Objective Three—*Promote Life Jacket Wear*

Strategy 1-3.1—Identify at-risk populations utilizing drowning data captured by the Boating Accident Report Database (BARD) System and develop a marketing strategy utilizing the results of the Survey of Louisiana Resident Boat Owners to encourage the at-risk population to increase life-jacket wear rates.

Strategy 1-3.2—Develop a relationship with the Louisiana Marine Dealers to disseminate life jacket wear information and promote the use of life jackets.

GOAL TWO—DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE BOATING SAFETY AND WATERWAY ENFORCEMENT PATROL ACTIVITIES

Objective One—*Increase Voluntary Compliance with Navigation Rules and Safety Equipment through Effective and Efficient Patrol Effort.*

Strategy 2-1.1—Continue to train new officers in Navigation Rules and identifying/documenting navigation rule violations.

Strategy 2-1.2—Enhance enforcement effort of navigation rules and use media messages to increase voluntary compliance.

Strategy 2-1.3—Work with and educate prosecutors and the courts on navigation rules violations, the implication the violations have on boating crash incidents and their role in overall compliance with boating regulations.

Strategy 2-1.4—Evaluate incidents of non-compliance with required safety equipment and target problem compliance areas through increased enforcement patrol, education, and public awareness campaigns.

Strategy 2-1.5—Continuance and expansion of distribution of safety equipment check sheets, posters, and brochures of required and recommended safety equipment for display and dissemination at point of sale locations and marinas.



Strategy 2-1.6—Enhancement and update of outdated training facility currently being operated by LDWF/LED.

Strategy 2-1.7—Improve patrol efforts of boating officers by utilizing technological advances in obtaining violator information and data collection.

Objective Two—*Ensuring Boating Crash Incident Reporting Data Accuracy and Completeness.*

Strategy 2-2.1—Improve incident report training by continuing to provide the NASBLA Boating Accident Course as a regular part of officer training. Provide clear and concise incident reporting criteria, including definitions, procedures, and guidance. Continue to provide new information to all officers through in-service training.

Strategy 2-2.2—Increase public awareness of boating crash incident reporting requirements so a more accurate analysis of boating crash incidents in Louisiana can be obtained.

Strategy 2-2.3—Improve boating incident data collection by utilizing computer tablets in the field to enter boating incident information onto our reports and into BARD.

Objective Three—*Reduce Boating Under the Influence Boating Crash Incidents and Fatalities.*

Strategy 2-3.1—Track and identify trends in alcohol use in boating by geographic area using the BARD data and DWI apprehensions by officers to determine areas to schedule proactive enforcement patrols.

Strategy 2-3.2—Continue to partner with other law enforcement agencies to conduct concurrent land and water enforcement patrols (i.e. from the boat to the launch to the road), and promote these patrols through the media.

Strategy 2-3.3—Partner with statewide alcohol beverage distributors to fund awareness campaigns on responsible alcohol use while participating in recreational water sports.

Strategy 2-3.4—Continue to provide in-service training to officers in boating under the influence (BUI) detection as well as train officers on the newly validated standardized field sobriety tests suitable for use in marine law enforcement.

Strategy 2-3.5—Develop and implement a strategy to educate prosecutors and judges throughout the state on the newly validated standardized field sobriety tests suitable for use in marine law enforcement.



Strategy 2-3.6—Continue and increase publicizing in all avenues of the media several high profile, high visibility patrols we conduct during holiday weekends such as Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, etc. Continue and increase participation and publicizing of the national BUI event Operation Dry Water.

GOAL THREE—MEASURE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Objective One—*Review and Evaluate Annually BARD Data, Compliance Data, Patrol/Public Contact Data, and Boating Education Data to Measure and Evaluate if Plan Objectives are being Met.*

Strategy 3-1.1—Review and identify annually USCG BARD data to track trends in causes, factors, etc. related to boating crash incidents and fatalities.

Strategy 3-1.2—Review and identify annually department data on boating safety compliance via citations, public contacts, patrol hours, DWI arrests, etc.

Strategy 3-1.3—Review and identify annually department data on successful completion of boating education courses.

Objective Two—*Implement Changes Necessary Annually to Meet the Objectives of the Plan. Assess and Update the Plan in Five Years.*

Strategy 3-2.1—Create a working group comprised of members of the enforcement division and the boating community to develop new strategies and tasks to reach goals listed in plan.

Strategy 3-2.2—Evaluate the final data after the five year period to re-evaluate goals and update plan for next five years.

GOAL FOUR—MAINTAIN AND/OR EXPAND BOATING SAFETY AND WATERWAYS ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS WHILE DEALING WITH POTENTIAL BUDGET CUTS FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL YEARS

Objective One—*Maximize Efficiency and Outputs Associated with Funds Received in Support of Boating Safety and Waterways Enforcement Activities.*

Strategy 4-1.1—Provide proactive boating safety enforcement patrols in concert with core mission responsibilities of fish, wildlife, ecosystem, and homeland security activities (primarily maritime security).

Strategy 4-1.2—Utilize equipment and training received in concert with other core mission responsibilities in support of boating safety and waterways enforcement and education.



Strategy 4-1.3—Prevent RBS Dollars from being used to offset budget shortfalls and maintain and/or increase overall effort.

Objective Two—*Seek New, Continued, and Creative Funding Sources.*

Strategy 4-2.1—Continue to seek partnerships with business and industry to fund outreach and marketing programs.

Strategy 4-2.2—Continue to partner with boating organizations, dealers, and schools to sponsor boating safety education courses.

Strategy 4-2.3—Work nationally to increase RBS grant dollars available to states.

Strategy 4-2.4—Coordinate and maintain memorandum of understanding with USCG; coordinate activity as needed to support boating safety and waterways enforcement activity.

Strategy 4-2.5—Partner with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation to increase the number of registered boaters in the state.